

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for supporting a broadcast service, comprising:
for each of a plurality of customers of the broadcast service,
determining, by executing server software, predicted content that the customer's client software is expected to acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on (1) billing information for the customer received from the customer's client software and that describes previously broadcast content acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and (2) a description of available content that will be available for broadcast by the service and that can be acquired by the plurality of customers' client software; and
deriving a broadcast schedule for the service based on the predicted content for the plurality of customers, wherein the schedule includes a description of some of the available content.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the available content includes digital movies that can be watched by the customers.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the available content includes digital audio recordings that can be listened to by the customers.
4. The method of claim 2 wherein the billing information is taken from one or more billing logs received from the customer's client software and that identify the customer, the previously broadcast movies acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and the fraction of each acquired movie that was actually played back as determined by the client software.
5. The method of claim 2 wherein the predicted content for each customer is determined by performing an algorithm in the server software that computes the relevance of one or more categories in which a movie can be placed to what the client software can acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on a description of the previously broadcast content identified in the billing information and that includes the one or more categories for each previously broadcast movie.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the predicted content for each customer is determined by further performing an algorithm in the server software that selects from among the available content a predicted movie whose one or more categories match the most relevant categories that were computed on behalf of the customer.

7. An article of manufacture comprising:
a machine-readable medium having a plurality of instructions stored therein which when executed by a processor cause an electronic system to support a broadcast service by determining, for each of a plurality of customers of the broadcast service, predicted content that the customer's client software is expected to acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on (1) billing information for the customer received from the customer's client software and that describes previously broadcast content acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and (2) a description of available content that will be available for broadcast by the service and that can be acquired by the plurality of customers' client software, and by deriving a broadcast schedule for the service based on the predicted content for the plurality of customers, wherein the schedule includes a description of some of the available content.

8. The article of manufacture of claim 7 wherein the available content includes digital movies that can be watched by the customers.

9. The article of manufacture of claim 7 wherein the available content includes digital audio recordings that can be listened to by the customers.

10. The article of manufacture of claim 8 wherein the billing information is to be taken from one or more billing logs received from the customer's client software and that identify the customer, the previously broadcast movies acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and the fraction of each demanded movie that was actually played back as determined by the client software.

11. The article of manufacture of claim 8 wherein the predicted content for each customer can be determined by performing an algorithm that computes the relevance of one or more categories in which a movie can be placed to what the client software can acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on a description of the previously broadcast content identified in the billing information and that includes the one or more categories for each previously broadcast movie.

12. The article of manufacture of claim 11 wherein the predicted content for each customer can be determined by further performing an algorithm that selects from among the available content a predicted movie whose one or more categories match the most relevant categories that were computed on behalf of the customer.

13. A system for supporting a broadcast service, comprising:
a server to determine, for each of a plurality of customers of the broadcast service, predicted content that the customer's client software is expected to acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on (1) billing information for the customer received from the customer's client software and that describes previously broadcast content acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and (2) a description of available content that will be available for broadcast by the service and that can be acquired by the plurality of customers' client software, the server to derive a broadcast schedule for the service based on the predicted content for the plurality of customers, wherein the schedule includes a description of some of the available content.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the available content includes digital movies that can be watched by the customers.

15. The system of claim 13 wherein the available content includes digital audio recordings that can be listened to by the customers.

16. The system of claim 14 wherein the billing information is to be taken from one or more billing logs received from the customer's client software and that identify the customer, the previously broadcast movies

acquired by the client software on behalf of the customer, and the fraction of each demanded movie that was actually played back as determined by the client software.

17. The system of claim 14 wherein the server is to further perform an algorithm that computes the relevance of one or more categories in which a movie can be placed to what the client software can acquire from the service on behalf of the customer, based on a description of the previously broadcast content identified in the billing information and that includes the one or more categories for each previously broadcast movie.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein the server is to further perform an algorithm that selects from among the available content a predicted movie whose one or more categories match the most relevant categories that were computed on behalf of the customer.